

The Henry Guest House  
South Corner Livingston Avenue and Morris Street  
New Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-499

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Henry Guest House  
South corner Livingston Avenue and Morris Street  
New Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey

Owner: The City of New Brunswick

Date of Erection: 1760

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Henry Guest Sr. (1726-1815) original owner

Present Condition:

Original, with front doorway replaced by present entrance and porch about 1825.  
House removed from original site at south corner of Livingston Avenue and New Street to new foundations at present address in 1925.

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, and cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry  
Exterior walls - coursed ashlar stone masonry front, rubble sides and rear  
Interior walls - lath and plaster on studding  
Chimneys - brick, built into inside of gable end walls  
Roof - gable, slate covered

Historical Data:

Documentary identification of the house and its original ownership being sought in the County records, the following account is compiled accordingly.

This property first appears in Middlesex transfers (which are of record only since 1795) in an indenture of 3 June 1812 (some 50 years after the estimated date of erection of the house) by which the sheriff, Alexander Dunn, having seized the same by

order of the Court and sold it at public vendue to satisfy four judgments against Henry and Moses Guest totaling some \$6500, conveyed the same to Henry Guest, Jr., for the sum of \$1900, subject to two mortgages held by Jane Cornell and Robert Morris, describing the property as being "All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land with improvements thereon situate in the City of New Brunswick, County of Middlesex, New Jersey, whereof Henry Guest the father of the said Henry Guest, Junior, was formerly seized and possessed," and which is formed by two small lots, the one whereof begins on the south side of Tanpit Brook at an Ash bush marked for a corner, thence along the line of Francis Deldine now or late John Bergen, south  $45\frac{1}{2}$  deg. west 1 chain to the land now or late of John Vanhuys, thence northwest 2 chains 62 links to Inions line, now or late the Turnpike Road (i.e. Livingston Ave.), thence along said line northeast 8 chains, thence southeast to the said Dildine line, now or late John Bergen, 2 chains 62 links, thence along the said last mentioned line south  $45\frac{1}{2}$  deg. west 7 chains to the Beginning, containing 2 acres more or less, all the above courses as the needle pointed in 1755, bounded at this time on the southeast and northeast by John Bergen and New Street, southwest by John Vanhuys and northwest by the Turnpike Road, the other a triangular lot lying in front of the dwelling house on the above described lot and between that and New Street and begins on New Street forty feet from the northwest corner of said John Bergen's house, thence running south 34 deg. 30 min. west to the line of the first lot in front of the dwelling house, thence along said line a westerly course to Georges Road, thence northerly along said road or Turnpike (Livingston Avenue) to New Street, thence easterly along said street to the place of beginning.

As indicated in the above, the lot on which this house was built had been purchased in 1755, evidently by Henry Guest, Sr., by a conveyance

not found on record. Of him it is said(a) that he married 19 Dec. 1748 Ruth Bong, was named one of the Aldermen in the second charter of New Brunswick in 1763, that he built the house here surveyed, was a tanner by profession (the name Tanpit Brook mentioned in the deed above cited having accordingly replaced Lyle Brook), and in 1767 recommended his specially treated leather for roofing, engaged also in the whaling business, was one of the four directors named in the First Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick in 1787, a vestryman of Christ Church, and died 24 January 1815 aged 89 years.(b) That he suffered as a patriot in the Revolution is shown by the following quoted contemporary bill for damages.(c)

Inventory of Sundries taken, burned and destroyed by the enemy and their adherents, between the 1st December 1776 and the 20th June 1777, the property of Henry Guest of New Brunswick.

To 8 tons of Engl. hay 1st qu ty	L 24. 0.0
1 horse cost L 12	12. 0.0
122 Slaughter hides had from Fort Lee	101.13.4
Damage done to my outbuildings worth	
L 20	15. 0.0
500 feet of Bilsted Boards	1.15.0
Garden fence containing 1750 foot board	
at 51	4. 7.6
1 small building	5. 0.0
Posts, workmen and Rails	3. 0.0
362 panels of goods, post and rail fence	
4 rails high, 1 feather bed, 3 pots,	
1 table, 12 chairs and a number of	
small articles in the household way not	
enumerated	12. 0.0
12 pairs of shoes & 1 pr. of boots	6.16.0
1 doz. calf skins	6. 0.0
1 Brass Blunderbush	3.15.0
3 Fire Locks	<u>10.10.0</u>

L 235.10.0

- (a) Wm. H. Benedict, New Brunswick In History, publ. 1925, p. 50
- (b) See also Wm. Nelson, N.J. Biogr. and Genealog. Notes, publ. 1916 in Collections of the N.J. Hist. Soc., p. 122; and Wm. H.S. Demarest, the Anniversary of New Brunswick, 1932, p. 68
- (c) Eugene McPike, Tales of Our Forefathers, 1898, p. 21

Henry Guest, Sr. and his sons Henry Jr. and Moses became involved in financial difficulties in the post-Revolution conditions, as indicated by the forced sale of the homestead in 1812 as above cited. Probate on his estate is not found in Middlesex County records, hence it is apparent that his sons had received their shares of his estate before his death, they having also interests in his business in New Brunswick. By his wife Ruth Bong (or - Forman?) Henry Guest is said to have had issue, viz.: Henry Jr., William and Moses\*, and a daughter(c), of whom the son Henry bought in the homestead (here surveyed) in the sheriff's sale in 1812 as above related.

Henry Guest Jr. and wife Jane, having removed to Albany, New York, by 18 October 1817, sold the same property by their deed of that date to Charles Gilmore of Warwick, Orange County, in that State, for \$5000, the description being given therein same as in the deed of 1812 cited above.

Gilmore and his wife Elizabeth evidently removed from Warwick to New Brunswick and occupied the house, for by their deed of 19 March 1819, they, being described as then of the latter place, sold the same to Samuel Taylor of Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, including also a house and lot on Schwerneen Street in the same city, the consideration of the sum of \$3040.

Nicholl and his wife Caroline A., of New Brunswick, held the property until 31 May 1832, on which date they passed title by deed to Adam Anderson of the same place for \$3600. This grantee mortgaged the premises and failing to satisfy the \$5723 due, the property was ordered seized and accordingly was offered by the sheriff at public sale held at Henry Perrin's Hotel on 28 June 1842, and there bought by William Banks of Middlesex County, the highest bidder, for \$1500.

\* Moses Guest b. 7 Nov. 1755, New Brunswick, N.J.; d. 22 Mar. 1828 Cincinnati, O., to which place he had rem. 1817; Ensign in Capt. Voorhees' Co. of 3d. Regt. Md. Militia in the Rev. War, later Capt. 2d Regt. do; famed for capture of British Lieut. Col. Simcoe on Amwell Road near New Brunswick 26 Oct. 1777, an account of which Capt. Guest wrote in 1796 and publ. 1823 in his "Poems and Journal". Reference(c) pp. 41 and 110, also Somerset Co. Hist. Quart., I. 265.

By deed of 15 April 1843, this William Banks and wife Isabella Henderson conveyed the same property to the Rev. John Proudfoot, D.D., of New Brunswick, describing it as in the deed from Henry Guest to Charles Gilmore above cited, the consideration being \$4000.

Dr. Proudfoot having removed to Bedloe's Island, New York, by 16 February 1864, sold part of the lot, with the house here considered, for \$7000 to Mott Bedell of Brooklyn, New York, who was living in the latter place at the date of his Will, 9 September 1874, in which he devised this house to his daughter Kate B., wife of Edward Vail, describing the lot as bounded by New Street, Livingston Avenue and Morris Street (which last had been cut through the original lot of Henry Guest).

The devisee, Mrs. Edward Vail, owned the house at the time of her will, 15 June 1912, proved 20 April 1915, by which she devised to her son Mott Bedell Vail of New Brunswick, "the stone and frame house in which I now reside, and known and designated as No. 96 Carroll Place in the said City," with the lands appertaining.

The devisee, Mr. Vail, and his wife Frances B., being of Allonhurst, New Jersey, gave their deed on 1st June 1923 conveying to Katherine J. Ferry of New Brunswick the property at the south corner of Livingston Avenue and New Street ("sometimes called Carroll Place").

From that grantee and her husband, Daniel J. Ferry, of New Brunswick, the same property passed by deed of 3 November 1924 to the Elks Building Corporation, of the same city - and the latter have since erected an imposing structure on the lot.

Threatened by demolition by that project, the venerable house here surveyed was most fortunately saved by purchase from a fund of \$3500 subscribed by the citizens of the city and by the New Brunswick Historical Society in 1925 and removed in toto by way

of Livingston Avenue to new foundations one block southwest, at the corner of Morris Street, on the city-owned lot on which also stands the Carnegie Public Library. (d) The tablet beside the front entrance of the house, as shown in photograph herewith, records the erection of the house in 1760 and the dedication in honor of Dr. Austin Scott, 1926.

Bibliography:

A search of title in Middlesex County Land and Probate records by Thomas J. Riley and Forrest M. Hargrove, H.A.B.S. abstractors, as reported May 23, 1940

*Lewis D. Cook*

Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

- (d) Account of purchase and removal of "A stone house in New Brunswick, recently known as the Vail homestead", publ. in Proceedings N.J. Hist. Soc., New Series, II, 334.